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Intercultural Communication in the Global Workplace: Critical perspectives

Prue Holmes, Durham University, United Kingdom, p.m.holmes@durham.ac.uk

Abstract

The critical intercultural turn in intercultural communication and cross-cultural management research has begun to question dominating traditional (positivist) approaches. Therefore, preparing people for the global workplace requires understanding of intercultural communication informed by critical scholarship: questioning the theory and practices of the “metropole” (or developed “North”); it also requires complementary research, education, and training that gives voice to those in the “global South” who may be marginalised, disenfranchised, poor, and exploited. Community diversity and interconnectivity, whether through communication technologies or movement of people, have placed new demands on preparing critical intercultural citizens for communication in the global workplace: people who can appreciate similarity and difference; who are capable of taking nonessentialist approaches to cultures, languages, and communities; who understand the role of the intercultural speaker; and who acknowledge the multiple languages and lingua franca Englishes at play, and the translingual, transcultural practices this recognition entails.

The context of intercultural communication in the global workplace: Current influences

What is a global workplace? What makes a workplace intercultural? Is it possible to imagine a monocultural, monolingual workplace—whether in a large city or a small, rural village? Can “local” workplaces still exist or must they be global? Is communication in the global workplace inevitably intercultural? If so, how, and why? These questions, and their answers, are important in understanding the terms “intercultural communication” and “the global workplace”, and their relationship to the world of work. In contemporary society, most communication is inevitably intercultural, involving people from other horizons as they buy and sell products and services, solve problems together, and organise alongside others and trade goods. Communication in these contexts may be verbal (face-to-face), virtual (ordering items via the Internet), mediated (using email, meeting via online technologies such as Skype and Webinars), textual (producing and interpreting documents), and multimodal (using nonverbal gestures for meaning, and producing and interpreting visual images and physical models). Such communication often occurs among people where languages and contexts may be at times familiar, at times strange, and where people have little or no training.

While the populations of some communities may not yet be characterized by “superdiversity” (Vertovec, 2014), this situation is less likely in the workplace. Geopolitical changes have increased the likelihood of intercultural contact in the workplace and contributed to its internationalization. This context is evident in the emergence of the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), a revised alliance within the ASEAN community (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations whose collaborative goal is “one vision, one identity, one community”), in intra-national movements from rural to urban centres, and in transnational mobility driven by war and poverty. Mary Louise Pratt (1991, p.34) described these social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, as “contact zones”—spaces characterized by highly asymmetrical power relations which individuals and diverse social groups must negotiate. These conditions often challenge habitual, taken-for-granted, and tacitly understood forms of communication and organisational discourses that inform and influence individuals’ lived experiences in the workplace. Thus, the current context of intercultural communication in the global workplace challenges status quo practices and perceptions that have dominated much research, education, and training in

business and tourism in the latter half of the twentieth century (see the next section), and opens up new directions for research, education, and training.

Studies in intercultural communication in the workplace now embrace many disciplines (e.g., communication studies, intercultural management, anthropology, applied linguistics, education, languages, psychology, sociology, healthcare and nursing studies, tourism, and marketing). The critical turn in intercultural communication (Diaz & Dasli, 2016; Holden, Michailova & Tietze, 2015) questions much of the extant research, education, and training in intercultural/cross-cultural communication and management. Researchers in cross-cultural management have adopted interpretive, critical, postmodern, and postcolonial approaches to researching and understanding intercultural communication, placing their research lens on workplace diversity, and the everyday lived experiences of the workers, rather than on essentialist models (such as those of Hofstede, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, Hall) which characterise cultures, nation states, and the people within them and the languages they speak as homogeneous (see McSweeney's methodological critique of Hofstede's research in the early 2000s). The critical turn is evidenced in the way researchers now question these essentialist models and prioritise theories that critique the hegemonic structures and habitual practices that privilege the powerful. This conceptual diversity opens up possibilities for research approaches that draw on a range of multi-/interdisciplinary and international perspectives and tools. Further, conceptual understandings of "intercultural communication" have been enriched by concepts such as "intercultural (communication) competence" (ICC), "intercultural dialogue", "intercultural/global citizenship", "Intercultural conflict", and "English as a lingua franca", concepts which are themselves undergoing further transformation and critique. These developments create a complex picture for researchers, educators, trainers, and students in understanding intercultural communication in the contemporary global workplace.

The history and development of intercultural communication in the global workplace

A fledgling area in the United States

Research on intercultural workplace communication generated in the United States (US) and Europe over the past 60 years, and largely drawn from the field of intercultural communication, has dominated approaches to education and training. Martin and Nakayama (2013), in their summary of the history and development of intercultural communication, explain how in the 1950s the US government needed to train business and government personnel in post-World War Two reconstruction, and this development initiated intercultural training. They discuss the dominance of models based on discrete, essentialist understandings of the culture that can be generalized to specific nation-states: e.g., Hofstede's four dimensions of cultural difference (power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance); Trompenaars' and Hampden-Turner's seven dimensions of national culture differences; and Edward Hall's taxonomies of cultural difference (see Chapters 2 and 3 in Martin and Nakayama (2013) for a critique of these approaches). These static models of cultural interaction have led to essentialist understandings of how person X, when meeting person Y, should perform in person Y's culture, or the need to learn the values, norms, and behaviours of Culture Y—often defined as national culture (i.e., the Japanese culture and language of Japan) in order to communicate with people there.

Other influences include Hammer's international development inventory (IDI) for measuring intercultural competence; and Bennett's developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS), a framework for explaining cultural difference and adaptation. The Society for International Education, Training, and Research (SIETAR) was established in 1974 to provide and promote intercultural training; and scholarly research was published in international peer-reviewed journal *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (the first issue appearing in 1977). However, notably absent in these approaches is the role of languages in interactions. (This situation is discussed later in this entry.)

Martin and Nakayama noted the adoption of these models for workplace education and training into Japanese universities, although now the emphasis has shifted towards developing global citizens (as promulgated by the Ministry of Education in Japan), particularly within the context of English language education. Similarly, in Australia and New Zealand, the absence of research and textbooks on intercultural communication and training in that context also meant that U.S. models and approaches in research and training predominated in higher education there.

The emergence of intercultural communication in the European Union: The importance of critical approaches and languages

In Europe, the development of intercultural communication came about for different reasons and from a different disciplinary perspective. Immigration into Europe from the 1980s and the establishment and expansion of the European Union led to an interest in developing the field in order to prepare people to live and work in societies in Europe and beyond which were (and still are) becoming increasingly diverse—linguistically, culturally, and in many other ways. The study of intercultural communication was, and still is, largely embodied in interpretive and critical approaches. A recent appraisal is evidenced in Holden et al's (2015) geopolitical critique of scholarship on cross-cultural management (in particular, see the chapter by Jack). These scholars describe how traditional and static theoretical models of cultural communication developed in the metrocentres of the "North", underpinned by etic perspectives that rely on researchers' outsider categories for generating cultural knowledge and ethnocentric assumptions, have resulted in understandings that reify culture and that seek to develop cognitive and behavioural patterns that can be generalized across multiple cultural systems.

These authors, and many others in the field, note that these approaches do not show the complexity and dynamics of individual experience in diverse contexts, the socially-constructed nature of communication, the complex power dynamics at play in interpersonal relationships, and the fluid nature of identity that individuals display as they negotiate self-representations according to the context, languages, and actors involved. Instead, these researchers are adopting approaches that are inclusive, context-specific/sensitive, and understand human experience from the periphery and global "South". Holden et al's seminal volume offers new directions for research, education, and training in cross-cultural management and the global workplace that focus on linguistic and cultural diversity, multiple identities, and the important role of power and economic development.

The field of intercultural communication has also been influenced by scholarship in languages and applied linguistics, particularly in the United Kingdom and Northern Europe (e.g., Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, and was supported by the Nordic Network for Intercultural Communication, "NIC"). Examples include (critical) linguistic ethnography (e.g., Blommaert, and the Birmingham School of Critical Linguistic Ethnography which includes Martin-Jones, Creese, and Blackledge), cultural studies and methods of critical discourse analysis (e.g., Fairclough, Stuart Hall), philosophical developments in hermeneutics (Gadamer, Heidegger), and phenomenology (Schutz, Merleau-Ponty) taking place in Europe, and critical theory more generally (e.g., Bourdieu, Foucault, Habermas).

In response to a European Union (EU) policy that introduced the learning of two other European languages alongside the official language(s) of the country, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), developed by researchers within the Council of Europe in 2001, emerged. The framework established guidelines for languages teaching, learning and assessment, including assessing the linguistic competence of an individual. Byram and Zarate's theoretical work on intercultural communication competence, developed in the 1990s, supported this development and firmly established the importance of the socio-cultural dimensions in language education (see Byram 1997). Intercultural communication competence became an important dimension in the study of intercultural communication (see the entry on Intercultural Competence for an overview of the concept and theoretical approaches).

Research that highlights the importance of social mobility, power relations, and the role of languages in these transitions, is displayed in the annual conferences of the International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication (IALIC), established in 2000. Its related journal *Language and Intercultural Communication* includes scholarship that critically questions and investigates power, privilege, and position in the workplace (whether global or local), focusing on those who are exploited, excluded, discriminated, disenfranchised, and impoverished by regimes and structures of the powerful and dominant. Ladegaard and Jenks (2015), in their special issue on workplace communication in that journal, remind scholars of the need for an agenda that is non-ethnocentric, anti-racist, and multicultural. Many of the papers in that special issue offer a “grassroots” response to intercultural communication in the workplace within research, education, and training.

The current situation: The need for critical intercultural citizens for the global workplace

The geopolitical issues affecting the global workplace in the twenty-first century—the transnational outsourcing of production and professional services, and the migration of skilled and unskilled workers across the global South and developing world, and into and within the metrocentres of the developed North—have heightened the importance of the critical turn in intercultural communication research and training. The social, political, and cultural conditions in many parts of the world, where languages and the people using them are under increasing pressure and pain (exemplified by the massive migration and displacement of people in the Middle East due to the impact of war, and reminiscent of Europe in the aftermath of World War II), are resulting in further linguistic, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity in the workplace and their surrounding communities. Simultaneously, increasing unemployment (particularly among youths) has led to an erosion of working conditions, volunteering and unpaid internships, zero-hours contracts, and challenges to the minimum wage. Where unions exist, they have become progressively disempowered and disembodied from state/national political decision-making. (An example of how researchers can develop models for employment in conditions of extreme precarity is evidenced in the programme to teach Arabic to speakers of other languages (TASOL), generated within the research project “Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State” (2016). The researchers have worked with teachers at the Islamic University of Gaza to develop an online platform for language learning and teacher education that generates employment for teachers of Arabic in Gaza.)

These conditions necessitate a critical approach to intercultural communication and languages which questions the power structures within organisations (and nation states) and ideologies they embody. Furthermore, globalisation and migration have challenged static, essentialist models of cultural interaction based on a nation state, a national culture, and a national language (i.e., the British culture and English language of the United Kingdom) to understand intercultural communication with “host nationals” from that country. The notion of “world languages” (or “defence” or “security languages” as they are currently called in the US) neglect other languages in circulation as people migrate and re-establish what Karen Risager calls “linguacultures” outside of the nation-state. For example, Risager (2006) gives the example of Danes establishing their Danish culture and language in communities around the world. Assumptions about native speakerism, national identity, standard and national language(s), and cultural homogeneity no longer make sense in the workplace and their interlinked communities. Therefore, research in intercultural communication has extended into new areas which include intercultural education and global/intercultural citizenship (see for example, Crosbie, 2014).

Mobility and study abroad programmes are also becoming more prominent as part of internationalisation of secondary and higher education. These programmes seek to encourage students to develop the “global competences” and/or “global citizenship” required to work and live in an increasingly intercultural and diverse world. These are also the attributes that universities expect of their graduates (as indicated in the mission statements of many universities worldwide).

These attributes include: the ability to critique organisations and power structures (e.g., monetary organisations, political bodies/parties) which perpetuate social and political injustice and inequality; the knowledge to recognize social and cultural hierarchies of oppression and exclusion; and the skills, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness to take responsibility and act against injustices and oppression (see the IEREST project, 2016). Many scholars in intercultural communication in Europe and beyond (e.g., Crosbie, Dazli, Dervin, Guilherme, Jack, Holliday, Ladegaard, MacDonald, O'Regan, Phipps) are undertaking critical theoretical research which questions the dominance of theories, methodologies and pedagogies of intercultural communication developed in the “metropole” or “centre” and their associated embedded structures of power, in favour of approaches that foreground voices from the “global South” and developing world. These critical approaches are also evidenced in the scholarship of the “National Association of Ethnic Studies” in the US, and by post-colonial scholars (see Connell’s work on “Southern theory”). Outside of the global “North” the picture is less clear: the Chinese Ministry of Education is currently adopting intercultural communicative competence into its language curriculum, in part, to prepare graduates for the global market place. Yet, voicing criticism on matters of social injustice and human rights is not publically permitted. Thus, the role of international and intercultural education in the context of student mobility, and internationalisation more generally, offers a pathway for opening up dialogue among graduates and their teachers on inequalities and injustices which will accompany graduates into the workplace.

Defining concepts and terms

The above discussion is predicated on a number of key concepts and terms that are important in intercultural communication in the global workplace and cross-cultural management. The salience and meaning of these terms are now discussed in relation to research, education and training.

Intercultural communication and context

The term “Intercultural communication”, and its roots “communication” and “culture” have been defined from a range of perspectives—positivist, interpretive, and critical (which embodies additional perspectives, e.g., post-modern, post-structuralist, postcolonial). Many of their definitions have suffered from reductive and hegemonic interpretations. Emerging out of positivist understandings of psychology and culture, they failed to capture the complex interplay of individuals as they draw on languages, agency, power, multiple identities, gender, family, memory, and that communication takes place in contexts—historical, geographical, locational. The workplace is constantly changing and evolving as people locate to new regions, workers connect across different time zones, and technology opens up ways of bridging physical distances by making possible virtual teamwork through various forms of online communication. The global context creates workplace encounters that are intercultural, plurilingual, socially-constructed interactions that are situated in time, place, space and purpose. As people relocate and engage with one another in different spaces, their languages, religions, identities and identifications, cultural practices and beliefs are (re)constructed, negotiated, contested, and endorsed. Accordingly, intercultural communication in the workplace is characterized by disruption and change.

The following definition, by Jack and Phipps (2005), begins to capture this complexity, fluidity, and diversity: they define intercultural communication as “dialogical and material exchanges between members of cultural groups” and where cultural membership is “marked variously by race, ethnicity, nationality, language, class, age, and gender” (p. 181). Vaiman and Holden (cited in Holden et al., 2015) highlight the importance of studying “context” in intercultural communication in the workplace in order to gain a more holistic and nuanced understanding of international business practices. This focus includes acknowledging the situational opportunities and constraints present in an organisation, and the ways in which these factors influence relationships and organizational behaviour, alongside the impact of globalisation and the local (country/regional) context (discussed later in this chapter).

Culture and representation

Culture is always present and influencing communication and social interaction in the workplace. The social, political, and economic conditions of the twenty-first century require critical/interpretive understandings of culture, identity and language that question power positions, relations, individuals' rights to speak, and representation. An anthropological understanding of culture as "enculturation" or learned patterns of behaviour, transmitted over time from generation to generation, shared by people living in groups, and consisting of shared artefacts and symbols, is challenged in the current era. Risager (2006), drawing on Hannerz, notes that individuals bring their ideas and modes of thought, developed throughout their life histories, to encounters. These are made accessible to others and to the public in communication, and in other creative ways, and then spread among local and more widespread populations and within and across social relationships, and through social interaction in the workplace. This situation invokes a more fluid definition of culture as a socially constructed, fluid, and intersubjective set of meaning-making practices of individuals and groups as they come together to make meaning and sense of their encounters. Culture is constantly being (re)created and (re)negotiated in intercultural encounters.

A critical (post-modern) conceptualization would also acknowledge how certain cultural/organisational and language practices, embedded in structures of power, are called upon and exercised as individuals comply with, or question such practices. Ladegaard's (2015) special issue on intercultural communication in the workplace provides excellent examples of this situation. In other words, people make, and do, culture together.

Holliday (2011) reminds us that culture is not a destiny, a pre-determined, fixed understanding of how individuals should communicate with one another. Such an understanding leads to essentialising culture and stereotyping individuals who exhibit the traits, elements, features and characteristics of that culture. According to Holliday, the concept "culture" therefore calls into play how individuals (re)present themselves as they express their diverse and hybrid social experiences—their multiple identities—and as they deal with the dynamic social processes and circumstances within their groups. Thus, culture also unifies as individuals coalesce and cohere in social groups due to their shared aspirations and circumstances. For example, people may share a current nationality, place of birth, a language, a religion, a profession or a neighbourhood and still be very different from one another. The "Other" is not always a stable or meaningful category. The concept also calls for an understanding and consideration of a range of related concepts: ethnocentrism; prejudice; power; hybridity, and its opposite, monoculturalism; difference, and similarity; agency, and group affiliation; resistance, and compliance. Understanding intercultural communication with others in the workplace requires consideration of the interconnections among all of these aspects.

However, as a caveat, some scholars (e.g., Jack, Ladegaard, Kesckes) question what is lost by rejecting (national) culture, and other a-priori categories, e.g., ethnicity, language, religion, when explaining linguistic and communicative behavior. Instead, a compromise between the two approaches may offer the possibility of acknowledging the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and other markings in intercultural communication, and the extent to which cognitive and behavioral patterns might be generalizable across cultures, while also allowing for context-specific and context-sensitive cultural understandings to be salient. For example, Ting-Toomey's work on face negotiation and conflict in the Chinese context, and Miike's "Asiacentric" theory of communication offer approaches to understanding communication from the Asian/Chinese center.

Globalisation

One of the key contextual factors influencing communication in the workplace is the concept of globalisation. Scholte (2005) defines globalisation as the transplanetary and supraterritorial connections among people. This connectivity occurs in social life, communication, production of goods and services, travel, finance, military, ecology, health, and law. Ladegaard and Jenks (2015)

summarize several scholars' definitions and conceptualisations of "globalisation". It can mean, as Giddens would suggest, the idea that we all live in one world and share a common understanding of this world; for Hannerz, globalisation is an interconnected world, a world of sameness devoid of diversity; and, for Smith, it is "a world characterized by a global culture which is tied to no place or period. It is context-less, a true *mélange* of disparate components drawn from everywhere and nowhere, born upon the modern chariots of global telecommunications systems" (Smith, 1990, p. 177, cited in Ladegaard & Jenks, 2015). A further meaning is in economic terms: economic internationalization and the spread of capitalist market relations which, according to O'Regan (2014), has challenged the dominance of the economic centre of the "developed West/North" and led scholars to shift their research focus to the "periphery"—the developing world, or "global South". Yet, O'Regan (2014) reminds us that globalisation, in the form of trading and exchange of goods, culture and languages, has been occurring for millennia—in the Mediterranean of the early Greeks and Phoenicians, across the continents of North and South America and Africa, from the European Voyages of Discovery in the fifteenth century, and by way of the world's early multinational companies—the Dutch and British East India Companies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This trade has also been accompanied by the exchange of languages, including Englishes (as a *lingua franca*).

These definitions and understandings are exemplified in the contemporary workplace as people/workers continue to construct interconnected and supportive communities of practice, while still exhibiting diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, historical and local practices, in order to live together and get things done (see for example, the studies in Ladegaard and Jenks, 2015). Despite fears among governments of weakening ties to the nation-state and personal/group identities, societal unrest at all levels continues as individuals and groups fight for the right to maintain their identity (whether linguistic, religious, cultural, ethnic, historical, regional, or even personal). Therefore, idealised definitions of globalisation, like that of Waters' (2001, p. 5), as "a social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and in which people act accordingly" apply perhaps to global elites only—people in business, education, and tourism. Such a nirvana is unlikely to be a universal, everyday experience in the workplace, which may be characterized by "glocal" (both global and local) practices. The exploitation of construction and domestic workers in places like Hong Kong and Saudi Arabia, the abuse and violence they continue to endure, and the limitations of the judicial and legal structures in acknowledging these workers' rights, highlight the need for critical approaches to researching, teaching and learning about intercultural communication in the global workplace.

Cross-cultural management

The term "cross-cultural management" (CCM) is often used in the context of management education and training. By contrast, in the social sciences, and language and culture studies, the term "intercultural communication" prevails, and their disciplinary homes mark their distinctiveness. As discussed above, "intercultural communication" foregrounds a focus on affiliate terms such as "culture", "identity", "language", and "power". However, in CCM, Jack (2015) invites a more integrative conceptualisation that questions the hegemony of positivist/functionalist theory and practice in the field, and introduces greater diversity into CCM theory and education. This understanding requires greater researcher/learner/practitioner reflexivity in research and education (including curriculum design, pedagogies, and student activities), and more critical paradigmatic and inter-disciplinary perspectives that include the humanities and social sciences. (See Holmes, 2012 and 2015, for examples of student research projects that draw on experiential learning and intercultural dialogue, and reflexivity in business education.)

Aligned to the critical/interpretive conceptualisations outlined above, Jack proposes that context and location should be addressed in CCM scholarship and education to be more inclusive, allowing for the inclusion of indigenous social sciences and their associated management knowledge

and practices. Globalisation has opened up the possibilities for a scholarly and practitioner dialogue among Western and non-Western scholars, educators, and learners (e.g., from BRICS and other Asian contexts, and indigenous communities) which, as Connell (cited in Jack, 2015) argues, have traditionally been sites for data collection or receptacles for outsiders' expert knowledge.

Languages in the workplace: Multilingualism, the intercultural speaker, translanguaging

Several scholars (e.g., Janet Holmes in New Zealand, Ingrid Piller in Australia, and Celia Roberts in the United Kingdom) are foregrounding the role of language and intercultural communication in the global workplace in their research. The "Language in the Workplace Project" (2016), undertaken by Janet Holmes and colleagues has developed a body of international research and publications on humour, small talk, meetings, miscommunication and management, gender and culture issues.

Within the field of cross-cultural management, multiple languages in the workplace have typically been viewed as a cost (in terms of translation), or as a variable in the study of trade or investment. The expansion of English in the global economy has led to English being categorised as a *lingua franca*, a default language, in order to manage the complexity of global organisations.

In the multilingual European context, the plurality of languages in the workplace are acknowledged in EU language policies and manifested in the CEFR (although in the UK monolingual English language attitudes tend to prevail). Researchers and teachers are now focused on understanding the relevance and contribution of pluralistic approaches in preparing individuals for the workplace. They are interested in whether there is a genuine will to maintain plurilingualism in multinational companies; whether linguistic and cultural diversity is perceived as an asset to competitiveness, as a challenge, an obstacle or as an opportunity; what practices and needs companies have at different levels and for various job performance, in terms of plurilingualism; and how pluralistic approaches might contribute to business needs in the field of intercultural training. Ignoring languages deprives recognition and understanding of the richness of insight into local communities and cultures, and the full capabilities of employees coming from these communities.

These foci contrast sharply with the intercultural training approaches in CCM focused on culture (discussed earlier), the emergence and acceptance of English as the *lingua franca* of business and the workplace, and the decline in foreign language learning in the English speaking world of the developed global "North". Mugan (cited in Holden et al., 2015) highlights the lack of understanding in the CCM literature on multilingual interactions in global operations, the bases for establishing trust and respect in the workplace. *Lingua franca* policies in global organizations and deficit approaches that characterize multilingualism as an organizational cost are now questioned, and the multilingual reality explored. Core concepts such as translation, context, proficiency, identity, and multilingualism are being re-examined through other (interpretive and critical) lenses, and these investigations are being linked to management concepts such as knowledge transfer, power relations, and trust.

Multilingualism. Steyaert and Janssens (cited in Holden et al., 2015) argue that monolingualism (the ability to use and the practice of using one language only in communication) and bilingualism (from the ability to produce utterances in two or more languages, to having native speaker abilities in these languages) create communicative and economic problems for organisations. They argue that rigid, monolithic structures and discrete systems that embody monolingualism and bilingualism result in speakers being unable to interconnect and interact, thus requiring the mechanical process of translation (between two national languages), which, in managerial terms, would accrue translation costs (through the need to employ translators). According to this understanding, questions of language proficiency (how fluent or knowledgeable a person is in a particular language) prevail. The languages present in an organisation might be evaluated in terms of their status and use, and in relation to the *lingua franca*(s) in use. Critical scholars in applied linguistics (e.g., Holliday, May, Risager, Singh) have attributed this situation to a European/Western hegemony and bias whereby unifying communities and identities around a single language (one language = one culture =

one nation/state) is an ideological stance which serves partisan interests of purity, exclusivity and domination, and may deny the complexity of language scenarios among language users.

By contrast, policies that promote “all languages at all times” would require people to have intercultural communication abilities, intercultural awareness, and affective skills that enable emotion management and tolerance. Translation would be seen as a more interpretational and socio-political interaction. Thus, an approach to understanding language would be interdisciplinary, focusing on applied (socio-)linguistics, (intercultural) communication, anthropology, and psychology. Acknowledging the heterogeneity and multiplicity of language(s) and their users requires the development of more democratic and egalitarian language policies and practices in the workplace, openness to change, and adaptation to emergent language ecologies.

The intercultural speaker. In the workplace contexts where more than one language is at play, Byram (1997) has introduced the term “intercultural speaker”, defined as the person who can mediate between two or more languages and cultures. The intercultural speaker needs both intercultural competence and linguistic competence in another language in order to understand and interpret documents, events, discourses, and conversations in that language. However, this is not the same as being an interpreter, where mastery of the language and cultural knowledge is expected, as would be expected with native speaker language competence. Learning more than one language can therefore be beneficial in helping communication in the workplace and mediating among people who may have different linguistic backgrounds. Further, as people live alongside one another competing for resources and jobs, or work together, they cannot ignore one another. So there is a need for the intercultural speaker, who is positioned between two or more individuals or groups and who can act and mediate between languages and cultures (by being intercultural). However, Byram’s intercultural speaker emerged from his theorisation of the modern foreign language learner; the global workplace, as already discussed, opens up different complexities which require different communicative strategies and approaches.

Translanguaging. Within the contemporary global workplace sociolinguists (e.g., Blommaert, Canagarajah, Creese and Blackledge, and Makoni and Pennycook) have illustrated how the terms “bilingual”, “multilingual” and “multicultural” have become problematic. These scholars do not see clear-cut boundaries between the languages people draw on in communication; instead, people engage in “translanguaging”, defined as the linguistic and communicative repertoires interlocutors draw on in a given context. Speakers simultaneously mobilize their language resources and multiple discursive practices in an encounter; language is thus understood as “translingual practice” to express voice, personhood and identity in a particular context; language is a social practice, speakers are social actors, and social interaction occurs in a socio-political context. Pennycook and Otsuji’s (2015) work on metrolingualism illustrates the concept of translanguaging in the urban workplace. Through their research in urban workplaces (e.g., in metropolitan Sydney), they show how people of different and mixed backgrounds use, play with, and negotiate meaning and identities through language(s) in their interaction in cafes, restaurants, and retail stores in metropolitan Sydney.

Languages in the workplace: The global spread of English and lingua franca English(es)

While the above discussion has highlighted the role of multiple languages in the workplace and some associated concepts and scholarship, the global positioning of English as a lingua franca (ELF)—defined as the contact language used by speakers of other languages (including English “mother-tongue” speakers) in new contexts of transnational communication—has also attracted much attention. Scholars researching in the area of ELF acknowledge how speakers bring their own culture-specific strategies to the communication encounter, and learn to adopt and adapt their language resources to strategically fit and align with other speakers to achieve the purpose of their communication—in English (see the scholarship of Baker, Canagarajah, Jenkins, and Seidlhofer for research and pedagogy on EFL). Canagarajah (2013) explains how lingua franca English (LFE)

communication events are both collaborative and negotiated as speakers move among different language systems; each linguistic exchange is underpinned by the social, cultural, contextual, and affective aspects operating in the encounter. Kramsch (2009), in her work on the multilingual subject, explores the identity and symbolic positioning of a speaker in an encounter, suggesting that language use (and language learning) is a highly subjective experience. Individuals draw on their emotions, memory, imagination, and senses to apprehend and articulate expression when using a language (whether their first, second, or any language.) and in anticipation of making meaning with another speaker. Speakers also negotiate and (re)construct their identities to make them amenable to and align with their interlocutors in the interactional context. Thus, speakers may also be faced with negotiating individual identities which, in the context, may be conflictual, multiple, and (re)shaping. Speakers' linguistic resources—language socialisation and awareness—developed in their local communities are thus brought into play in acquiring LFE or another language. (See the chapters by Anne Kari Bjørge, Eric Henry, and Tiina Räisänen in Holmes & Dervin, 2016, for examples of the intercultural dimensions of LFE exchanges in the workplace.)

In the multilingual workplace, Canagarajah discusses how individuals may bring their own local linguistic (and symbolic) membership to the interaction. It may be difficult to identify a “mother tongue” or “native language” as speakers must negotiate the tensions of belonging and stepping out of local language/social groupings, or where languages, literacies and discourses are mobilized in a plurilingual manner. Therefore, such terms become problematic as it may be difficult to categorize which language or form is being used when and how, according to the traditional “monolingual” understanding of a language.

Such contexts of language use, and the identity work and meaning making entailed, begin to question the fitness of the concept of linguistic (and intercultural) “competence”. Both Kramsch and Canagarajah argue that meaning making among multilingual subjects resides in a multimodal, multisensory, ecological understanding and interpretation of diverse symbol systems (icons, space, colour, gesture and other representational systems), modalities of communication (writing, sound, visuals, touch, body, smells), and the multilateral aspects of languages as speakers mobilise languages and draw on one another's linguistic and intercultural resources. Competence is thus an adaptive process to accommodate the apparent disorder and randomness of the situation, rather than one of linear, structured language acquisition or applying mental rules to situations. Language learning and use are as much about the attitudinal, psychological and perceptual dispositions of communicators; they are also ecological, where speakers align their resources to the situational demands and the nuances of the environment, and intercultural, as speakers negotiate the contextual and relational aspects of the encounter, as well as their own cultural and value positions.

These various definitions and conceptualisations of language(s) highlight the centrality of languages in intercultural communication encounters in the global workplace. All speakers, whether monolingual or multilingual, mobilise their linguistic and cultural resources to make meaning in interaction. Therefore, these resources need to be acknowledged so that appropriate organisational practices, processes, and policies can be implemented for all. Similarly, researchers and educators need to account for language diversity in cross-cultural and intercultural research and training programmes respectively.

Future directions in research, theory, methodology and education

This survey of intercultural communication in the global workplace highlights the diversity of theories, concepts, definitions, research practices, and pedagogies. While it may be an exaggeration to assume that all workplaces embody the conditions of globalisation, or somehow represent a “brave new world”—a postmodern, anarchic society devoid of linguistic and cultural stability or predictability (as suggested in some of the definitions of globalisation), scholarship concerning the global workplace, especially in the past two decades, has begun to question the stability of national cultures and languages, and the hegemonic structures and habitual practices that have privileged the powerful. It has also highlighted the need for more nuanced and complex understandings of

personhood, and acknowledgement of the multiple languages, cultures, and identities that individuals enact in intercultural communication. For example: culture is socially constructed among those engaged in the intercultural encounter; in presenting themselves to others, individuals call on and prioritise certain cultural and linguistic resources and identities in these encounters; and multilingual, intercultural interactions (which include lingua francas and lingua franca Englishes) are likely to prevail as individuals engage in knowledge transfer, power relations and trust-building for future cooperation.

Conceptual understandings of “intercultural communication” are constantly being enriched by other concepts such as “global citizenship”, “multilingualism”, the intercultural speaker”, “translingual practice”, “English as a lingua franca”, “lingua franca Englishes”, which themselves continue to undergo transformation and critique.

The diversity of approaches to research and education in intercultural communication in the global workplace discussed here open up possibilities for future inquiry that foreground inclusivity, criticality, and multi-/interdisciplinarity. Future research needs to continue to build on and question the theories, concepts, and methods in intercultural communication and the related disciplines of applied linguistics, anthropology, cultural studies, ethnography, and cross-cultural management, especially those developed in the Northern metropole. Many researchers engaged in critical research, education and training, and researchers from the global “South” are mobilising critical and “Southern” approaches that give voice to people in the margins of society. Future research must also grapple with the vast inequalities of power and wealth ushered in by the era of globalisation, evidenced in the exploitation of those less skilled, and in the movement of people who are economically disadvantaged to the global North. Similarly, as educators prepare learners for the global workplace, they must engage them in real-life scenarios that are characterized by superdiversity and reflect all types of inequalities in intercultural encounters.

Cross references

SEE ALSO: Cosmopolitanism, critical post-colonial perspective; critical intercultural communication; globalization and global village; identity and intercultural communication; intercultural citizenship; intercultural competence development; intercultural training for educators; language and inequality; othering and otherness; pedagogy across cultures; socio-linguistic approach to intercultural communication; transculturality; transnationalism

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Brief author biography

Prue Holmes is a reader in the School of Education at Durham University and Chair of *International Association for Languages and Intercultural Communication* (IALIC). She researches and publishes in the areas of intercultural encounters, languages and intercultural communication, and intercultural education. She is co-Investigator on the AHRC-funded project “Researching multilingually at the borders of language, the body, law and the state (AH/L006936/1) <http://researching-multilingually-at-borders.com/>, and was principal investigator on the earlier “Researching multilingually” network project (AH/J005037/1). <http://researchingmultilingually.com/>. She has recently published *The cultural and intercultural dimensions of English as a lingua franca* (Multilingual Matters), coedited with Fred Dervin.